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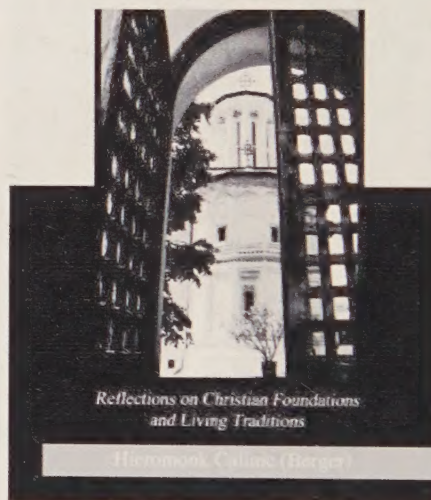
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COVER: Icon of Saints Peter and Paul from St. Sophia Cathedral, Novgorod, Russia, circa 1050AD.

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SIGNIFICANT DETAILS IN THE ACCOUNTS OF THE RESURRECTED CHRIST

by
Hieromonk Calinic (Berger)

The appearances of Jesus after His Resurrection from the dead are indeed a great mystery. In them are found details and descriptions of events which, if they were fabricated, would be the absolute last things a writer would include, if his goal was to convince others that Jesus had truly and bodily risen from the dead. Believing scholars today (for example, N.T. Wright) have pointed out that these details actually point to the fact that the Resurrection appearances described in the Gospels could *not* have been the later fabrications of the Church, as is so often claimed by unbelievers. This can be demonstrated by even a brief examination of some of these details.

To begin with, the use of women as witnesses in the ancient world would be something that could discredit the entire account, since in both Greek and Judaic culture, women could not appear in court as witnesses. In the third century, the anti-Christian philosopher Celsus discounts the Resurrection testimony of the Gospels based on their use of female testimony. Even St. Paul curiously omits the women's testimony in his tally of eye-witnesses (1 Cor 15:5-8). Certainly, as Wright points out, the Gospel writers knew of this bias, and of the fact that female testimony would not have "helped" the Gospel cause. Why then would they have invented it? Rather, the only viable reason for their recording the testimony of the women seeing the Resurrected Jesus is because the women did in fact see Him. They would have gained nothing, and lost a great deal, if these were fabricated accounts.

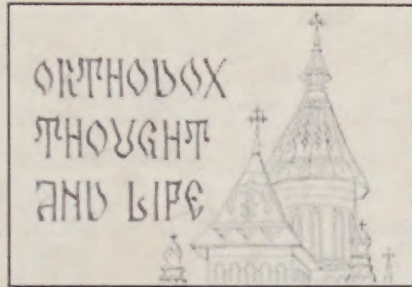
Secondly, Wright points out that the appearances of Jesus do not conform to what would have been expected of anyone resurrected from the dead, according to the beliefs of Second Temple Judaism. In this view, any of the saints or righteous resurrected would be filled with light and glory, shining like "stars of heaven," as for example, in the prophecies of Daniel (12:2-3) and the Wisdom of Solomon (3:9). But this is not the case in the Gospel descriptions of the Resurrected Jesus. True, His glorious appearances to Paul on the road to Damascus and to John on Patmos are filled in these instances with heavenly glory, but they occur from the other world, after Jesus' Ascension. So, if the accounts of the Resurrection were fictitious creations, could not the Gospel writers have done a better job in describing Jesus as the

religious Jews of their day would have expected a Resurrected Messiah to appear, that is, surrounded by heavenly glory? Yet the light of the Transfiguration is strangely absent in His appearances to the disciples. We again are led to the only viable conclusion: the descriptions of Jesus after His Resurrection are recorded exactly as they occurred. No other explanation would allow for what we do *not* find in the narratives describing these events.

Lastly, we come to the most mysterious facet of the Resurrection accounts: the fact that Jesus is often unrecognized. Luke and Cleopas walk and talk with Him for hours and He is not recognized until the breaking of the bread, at which point "their eyes were opened" and He disappeared (Lk 24:13-35). Mark summarizes this event saying that Jesus had appeared "in a different form" (Mk 16:12). Mary Magdalene thinks Jesus is the gardener until He calls her by name (Jn 20:14-18). The disciples on the sea shore eat with Him, and yet "none dared ask Him, who art thou? knowing it was the Lord" (Jn 21:12). Even at the Great Commission itself, the Gospel of Matthew tells us "some doubted" (Mt 28:17). None of these accounts would go far to convince others of the Resurrection; and so again, if they were simply fabricated, the writers could have done a much better job. Or better said, if fabricated or invented, the Gospel accounts of the Resurrection would not be as they are at all. Again, the only viable explanation for their content is that they are recording what really happened.

In each of these instances, the Gospel accounts witness in a straight-forward manner (without referencing any prophecies, etc.) to the disciples' experience of the Resurrected Christ. Two general observations can be made. First, after the Resurrection, Jesus is not the same: as with a grain of wheat, what is sown does not resemble what is raised (cf. 1 Cor 15:37). His body has been spiritualized and transformed. It is no longer subject to death (cf. Rom 6:9). It is not bound to the limitations of the material world in the same way, yet it remains a material body "with flesh and bones" (Lk 24:39). Jesus appears in the disciples' gathering place when doors are shut (Jn 20:19,26) – He does not knock at the gate, like Peter (Acts 12:13). To prove that He is not "a ghost" (the term itself

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A CAUSE TO CELEBRATE!

110th Anniversary of St. Nicholas Church, Regina SK



St. Nicholas Parishioners and visitors with His Eminence, Archbishop Nathaniel, Fr. Ionut Maerean (Parish Priest), visiting clergy, and Her Honour, Vaughn Solomon Schofield, Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Saskatchewan.

Having intoned the end of the Holy Liturgy, His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel turned to face the faithful and said: "Christ is risen! ... Please remain standing for the entrance of Her Honour, Vaughn Solomon Schofield, Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Saskatchewan who has come to bring greetings from Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada and the British Commonwealth of Nations."

Svetlana Apostol and her husband Eugeniu were near the back of the little church; all eyes turned back towards them and the entrance of the church. An expectant silence preceded the emergence into the church of a female officer of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police dressed in traditional red serge, hatless and in slow procession. Behind her came the Lieutenant Governor, followed by her husband, Gordon Schofield, then their aide-de-camp, also female, dressed in full Mountie red. The procession approached the front of the church and took seats to face His Eminence who was about to begin his sermon. The congregation became seated.

Svetlana was in awe; she had never seen anything like this before. It had been only a few months since she and Eugeniu had left Chisinau, Moldova to come

to Canada. Now, here they were in Regina, both well-employed and witnessing history unfold before their eyes. Their friends Yuri and Tamara Stegari were seated beside them. Tamara was holding baby Adalina on her knee. Adalina, baptized here at St. Nicholas just weeks before, had this very day received communion in the presence of His Eminence, Nathaniel, Archbishop of the Romanian Orthodox Church in the United States and Canada. This was history!

Many people had come, from near and far, just to be part of this celebration of the 110th Anniversary of the first and oldest Romanian Orthodox Church in North America – St. Nicholas in Regina, SK.

Serving at the altar with St. Nicholas' priest, Rev. Fr. Ionut Maerean, were: Rev. Fr. Cosmin Sicoe from St. George Cathedral (Regina, SK), Rev. Fr. Cosmin Vint, Protection of the Mother of God (Ft. Qu'Appelle, SK), along with Rev. Dn. Clayton Ungrin (Winnipeg, MB) and Rev. Dn. Ken Gaber from St. Elias the Prophet Church, in Lennard, MB (also celebrating their 110th Anniversary). Assisting in the altar was Mr. Michael Majeran of Regina.

Rodney Flunder, President of the Orthodox Broth-

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SOLIA MAY/JUNE 2012

SEEDING THE WORD OF GOD ON THE CANADIAN PRAIRIES



Archbishop Nathaniel consecrates the new Holy Altar Table at St. George Cathedral, Regina, SK assisted by Fr. Cosmin Sicoe (Parish Priest) and visiting clergy listed below.

At the time when the Canadian farmers are busy seeding the seemingly endless Canadian Prairie, His Eminence, Archbishop Nathaniel, came to do another kind of seeding: the seeding of the word of God in people's souls.

Archbishop Nathaniel landed in Regina on Friday, May 11th to be with his South Saskatchewan flock for more than ten very busy days.

The weekend of Sunday, May 13th was dedicated to the 110th Anniversary of St. Nicholas Church in Regina. On Saturday, May 12th, His Eminence celebrated the Memorial Service at St. Nicholas; and then, accompanied by Rev. Fr. Ionut (John) Macrean and the faithful of the parish, he blessed the graves of the founders and the members of the church. The day was completed with the celebration of the Service of Great Vespers followed by a "Wine and Cheese" fellowship.

On Sunday, May 13th, the Hierarchal Divine Liturgy was celebrated at St. Nicholas Church by His Eminence assisted by Rev. Fr. Ionut Macrean, parish priest, Rev. Fr. Cosmin Sicoe, Rev. Fr. Cosmin Vint, Rev. Dn. Clayton Ungrin and Rev. Dn. Ken Gaber and a great number of the faithful. The Holy Liturgy was followed by a festive anniversary banquet at Seven Oaks Restaurant in Regina.

On Monday, May 14th and Tuesday, May 15th, His Eminence visited the parishes of St. Elias, Lennard (MB), Holy Trinity, MacNutt (SK), St. John the Baptist, Shell Valley (MB) and Sts. Peter and Paul, Canora (SK).

On Wednesday, May 16th and Thursday, May 17th, His Eminence made all the necessary preparations for the Consecration of the new Holy Altar Table and the blessing of the new icons of St. George Cathedral in Regina.

On Friday, May 18th, His Eminence met with the clergy of the Western Canadian Deanery at the Orthodox Christian Centre in Fort Qu'Appelle. The day was completed with the celebration of the service of vespers at the Protection of the Mother of God Mission in Fort Qu'Appelle.

Saturday, May 19th was dedicated to the meetings of the Western Canadian Deanery and the Orthodox Brotherhood of Canada. The meetings took place at the Orthodox Christian Centre in Fort Qu'Appelle. V. Rev. Fr. Martinian Ivanovici of blessed memory and all the deceased members of his family were remembered during the Memorial Service that was celebrated on that Saturday at noon. The day ended with the celebration of the service of Great Vespers at St. George Cathedral in Regina, followed by a "Wine and Cheese" fellowship.

On Sunday, May 20th, Archbishop Nathaniel celebrated the Divine Liturgy at St. George Cathedral. His Eminence also celebrated the service for the consecra-



His Eminence, Archbishop Nathaniel with clergy and faithful at the Orthodox Christian Centre in Fort Qu'Appelle, SK.

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PENTECOST:

THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

In the Old Testament, **Pentecost** was the feast which occurred fifty days after Passover. As the Passover feast celebrated the exodus of the Israelites from the slavery of Egypt, so Pentecost celebrated God's gift of the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai.

In the new covenant of the Messiah, the Passover event takes on its new meaning as the celebration of Christ's death and resurrection, the "exodus" of men from this sinful world to the Kingdom of God. And in the New Testament as well, the pentecostal feast is fulfilled and made new by the coming of the "new law," the **descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples of Christ.**

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed as resting upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit ... (Acts 2:1-4).

The Holy Spirit that Christ had promised to his disciples came on the day of Pentecost (Jn 14:26; 15:26; Lk 24:49; Acts 1:5). The apostles received "the power from on high," and they began to preach and bear

witness to Jesus as the risen Christ, the King and the Lord. This moment has traditionally been called the "birthday of the Church."

In the liturgical services of the feast of Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit is celebrated together with the full revelation of the divine Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The fullness of the Godhead is manifested with the Spirit's coming to man, and the Church hymns celebrate this manifestation as the final act of God's self-disclosure and self-donation to the world of His creation. For this reason, Pentecost Sunday is also called **Trinity Day** in the Orthodox tradition. Often on this day, the **icon of the Holy Trinity** — particularly that of the three angelic figures who appeared to Abraham, the forefather of the Christian faith — is placed in the center of the church. This icon is used with the traditional **pentecostal icon** which shows the tongues of fire hovering over Mary and the Twelve Apostles, the original prototype of the Church, who are themselves sitting in unity, surrounding a symbolic image of "cosmos," the world.

On Pentecost we have the final fulfillment of the mission of Jesus Christ and the first beginning of the messianic age of the Kingdom of God mystically present in this world in the Church of the Messiah. For this reason, the **fiftieth day** stands as the beginning of the era which is beyond the limitations of this world, fifty being that number which stands for eternal and heavenly fulfillment in Jewish and Christian mystical piety: seven times seven, plus one.

Thus, Pentecost is called an apocalyptic day, which means the day of **final revelation**. It is also called an **eschatological day**, which means the day of the **final and perfect end** (in Greek *eschaton* means "the end"). For when the Messiah comes and the Lord's Day is at hand, the "last days" are inaugurated in which "God declares... I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." This is the ancient prophecy to which the Apostle Peter refers in the first sermon of the Christian Church which was preached on the first Sunday of Pentecost (Acts 2:17; Joel 2:28-32).

Once again, it must be noted that the feast of Pentecost is not simply the celebration of an event which took place centuries ago. It is the celebration of what must happen and does happen to us in the Church today. We all have died and risen with the Messiah-King, and we all have received his Most Holy Spirit. We are the "temples of the Holy Spirit." God's Spirit dwells in us (Rom 8; 1 Cor 2-3, 12; 2 Cor 3; Gal 5; Eph 2-3). We, by our own membership in the Church, have received "the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit" in the sacrament of chrismation. Pentecost has happened to us.



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The **Divine Liturgy of Pentecost** recalls our baptism into Christ with the verse from Galatians again replacing the Thrice-Holy Hymn. Special verses from the psalms also replace the usual antiphonal psalms of the liturgy. The epistle and gospel readings tell of the Spirit's coming to men. The kontakion sings of the reversal of Babel as God unites the nations into the unity of his Spirit. The troparion proclaims the gathering of the whole universe into God's net through the work of the inspired apostles. The hymns *O Heavenly King* and *We have seen the True Light* are sung for the first time since Pascha, calling the Holy Spirit to "come and abide in us", and proclaiming that "we have received the heavenly Spirit." The church building is decorated with flowers and the green leaves of the summer to show that God's divine Breath comes to renew all creation as the "life-creating Spirit." In Hebrew, the word for Spirit, breath and wind is the same word, "**ruah**."

Blessed are You, O Christ our God, who has revealed the fishermen as most wise by sending down upon them the Holy Spirit: through them You drew the world into Your net. O Lover of Man, Glory to You! (Troparion).

When the Most High came down and confused the tongues, he divided the nations. But when he distributed the tongues of fire, he called all to unity. Therefore, with one voice, we glorify the All-Holy Spirit! (Kontakion).

The **Great Vespers of Pentecost evening** features three long prayers at which the faithful kneel for the first time since Pascha. The Monday after Pentecost is the **feast of the Holy Spirit** in the Orthodox Church, and the Sunday after Pentecost is the **feast of All Saints**. This is the logical liturgical sequence, since the coming of the Holy Spirit is fulfilled in men by their becoming saints, and this is the very purpose of the creation and salvation of the world. "Thus says the Lord: Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I your God am holy" (Lev 11:44-45, 1 Pet 1:15-16).

From The Orthodox Faith, Volume II: Worship, pp. 113-117. Father Thomas Hopko, Dept. of Religious Education of The Orthodox Church in America, 1972.

Seeding ... *Cont. from page 5*

tion of the new Holy Altar Table and the blessing of the new icons (written by the hand of Niculai Enachi) and the new icon screen. His Eminence was assisted on Sunday by Rev. Fr. Cosmin Sicoe (parish priest), V. Rev. Fr. Daniel Nenson (attached priest and Dean Emeritus), V. Rev. Fr. John Mancantelli (former priest of St. George), V. Rev. Fr. George Treff (former priest of St. George), Rev. Fr. Ionut Maorean (St. Nicholas Church, Regina), Rev. Fr. Cosmin Vint (Protection of

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A.R.F.O.R.A. SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT



Loredana Ramona Balaie, daughter of Virgil and Cornelia Balaie, is the honored recipient of the \$1,000 Martha Gavrila Graduate Scholarship. She has been a member of Sts. Peter and Paul Church in Dearborn Heights, MI since 1999 when she and her parents arrived

in America. (Loredana) Ramona has been very active in the parish ever since. She is a graduate of the Sunday School program and has held several offices in AROY, including President. She attended the VATRA camps and was a VATRA Camp Counselor. She continues to be active in parish activities.

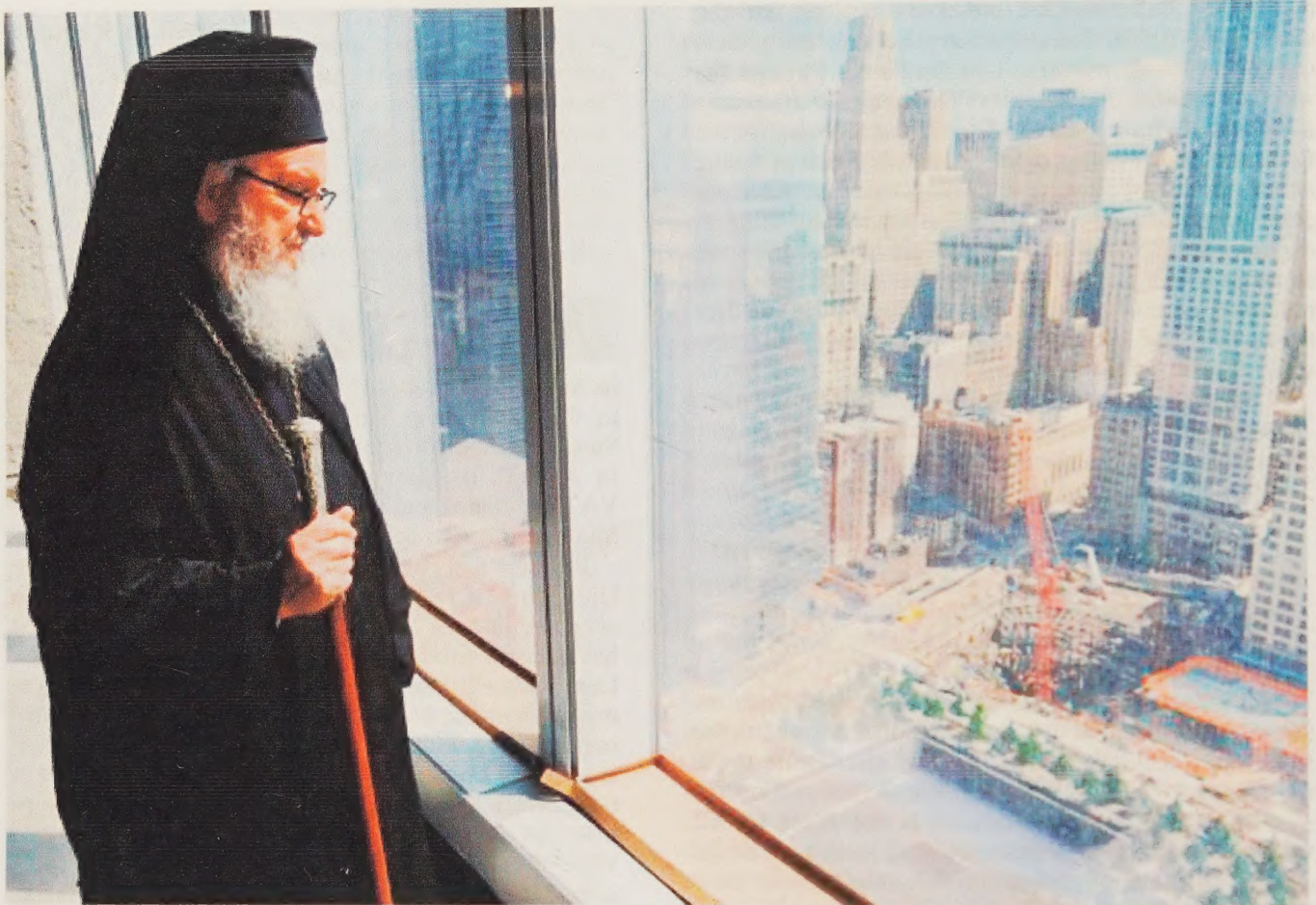
Ramona has completed her studies at Wayne State University in Detroit, MI, in Pre-Med, and has been accepted into the Medical School at Wayne State. She has been an outstanding Honor student on the Dean's List (2008 – 2012). In addition to her academic achievements, Ramona has been highly involved in the community, both within Wayne State University and outside in the community at large. She has done exceptional work as a Biomedical Research Assistant, helping with tissue culture, DNA isolation, and PCR. At WSU, Ramona has been an officer in Pre-SOMA (Student Osteopathic Medical Assoc.); co-chair of PACE; member of FAN (Food and Nutrition group), the American Medical Student Association, the Honors Student Association, and the National Society of Collegiate Scholars. Ramona also donates her time to several worthy volunteer causes, such as: the Cass Clinic, Garden City Hospital, Oakwood Hospital, and Gleaners Community Food Bank. She has been part of Detroit Fellows Tutoring Project, providing one-on-one tutoring to teach reading skills to early elementary children in the Detroit Public Schools.

A.R.F.O.R.A. is honored to award Ramona a schol-

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ARCHBISHOP DEMETRIOS OF AMERICA TOURS ST. NICHOLAS' FUTURE SITE AT WORLD TRADE CENTER



Archbishop Demetrios is looking at the future site of St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, from the 37th FL of the new 1 WTC Tower. (Photo © Dimitrios Panagos/GOA)

NEW YORK – “The new World Trade Center will not be whole and complete until the St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church is rebuilt.” With these words, Patrick J. Foye, Executive Director of the Port Authority welcomed Archbishop Demetrios and other representatives of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese and the St. Nicholas parish. The meeting was held, June 6, at the offices of the Director for the WTC construction, Steven Plate, and included a comprehensive presentation of the planning and construction underway in the World Trade Center. The future site of St. Nicholas Church was a significant part of the presentation through architectural plans and virtual reality renderings.

Archbishop Demetrios praised New York Governor Andrew Cuomo for his role in achieving a positive resolution for the rebuilding of St. Nicholas Greek

Orthodox Church, the only house of worship destroyed during the attacks of September 11, 2001. His Eminence also remarked on the important role of New York Senator and Majority Leader Dean Skelos and other individuals including Greek-American entrepreneur Archon Dennis Mehiel, who was present at the meeting. Other participants included His Grace Bishop Andonios of Phasiane, Chancellor of the Archdiocese, His Grace Bishop Sevastianos of Zela, Chief Secretary of the Holy Eparchial Synod, Fr. Alexander Karloutsos, Fr. Mark Arey, Dr. Anthony Limberakis, National Commander of the Archons, Aphrodite Skeadas, National President of the National Greek Orthodox Philoptochos Society, Dr. John Grossomanides, Supreme President of AHEPA, Stamatios Lykos and Olga Pavlakos, representing the

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WOMAN AT THE WELL AND MOTHER'S DAY

by
Psa. Lillian Lupu

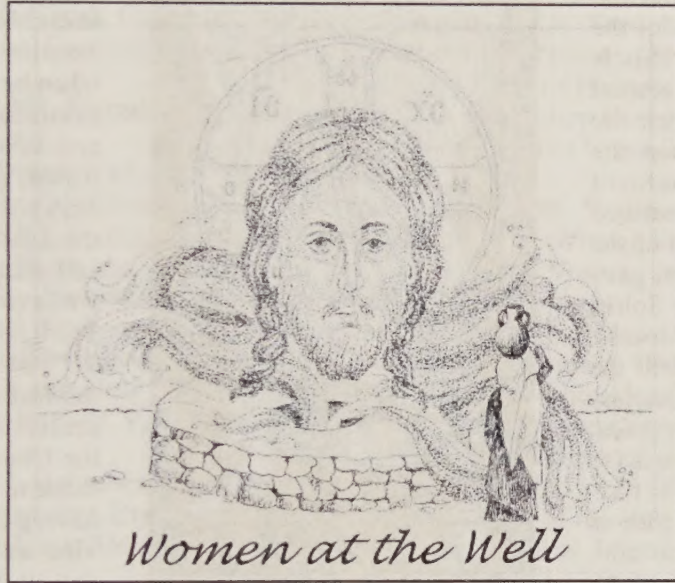
This year, both Mother's Day and the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman fell on the same day. Over the years, whenever this has happened, I always smiled at the combination. On Mother's Day, we remember our mothers and as Orthodox Christians, we should remember our Holy Mother, the Theotokos. It begs the question: when Mother's day is celebrated on the same day as the Samaritan Woman – who was sinful, perhaps rebellious, and of a tribe that was not respected – what could these two commemorations have in common?

Samaritans were not well respected by the Jews during those days, so when Jesus approached the woman and asked her to give Him some water, she was surprised that He would even speak to her. "How is it that you, being a Jew (which she could discern by his clothing and manner of speech), ask a drink of me, a Samaritan woman?" (Jn 4:9). The story continues to describe a conversation in which Christ tells the woman that He is the source of Living Water. The woman doesn't get it. She questions him again, and as He responds, she slowly starts to understand. She asks to partake of this water that He offered her. She then drops her jug of water and runs to tell the people in town what she has found. Christ offered a free gift to a woman who was both a Samaritan and sinful (for she had five husbands and now a common law husband). He made it a point to be at that well to speak to her individually, because he loved her and wanted to offer her Salvation. As a result, she met Jesus, learned about Him, came to believe in Him and went to tell others about the Faith.

Christian mothers can be compared to the Samaritan woman. A strange comparison, you may say! While we all carry sin and are not always loved by everyone, Christian mothers know Jesus Christ. They have come, each one on her own journey, and maybe it has taken a while to "sink in," but they eventually understood. They have walked to the well doing household chores, because they are necessary. They know His Word and partake of the Living Water, because they have grown to love Him. They will drop everything and run to teach their children to love Christ as the Samaritan

woman ran to tell her friends.

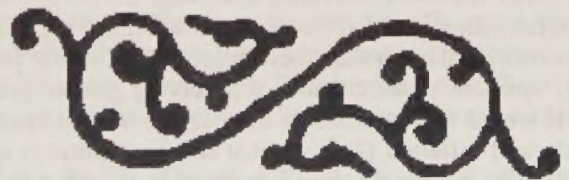
Our Mother of all mothers is the Holy Theotokos, the mother for all Christians. She knows Christ better than any of us, for she is His Mother. While she was doing a household chore, she was visited by the Archangel Gabriel. She learned to understand the 'message' given to her. Mothers have unconditional love for their children. A mother is the biggest source of strength and remains the source of inspiration for her children. The Theotokos is our biggest source of strength. She is the example for all Christian mothers, and for all women.



I recently met a young woman with a traditionally Orthodox last name. I eagerly asked her if she goes to an Orthodox church here in town. She said she used to but has fallen away and hasn't gone in years. I thought of our Holy Mother and how sad she must be to hear this. "Why don't you come and hear the Word of my Son? Why don't you want to partake of the Living Water He offers you?" As our mother, the Theotokos cares about our actions. We should flee to her for guidance even when our lives

get busy.

We all need to respond to the invitation which Christ made to the Samaritan woman, to ask Him for Living Water. This column is named in honor of the Samaritan woman, who met Jesus at Jacob's well, in the midst of the cares of her daily life, and accepted His invitation. I pray that those who read this column are moved to do likewise and respond, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world" (Jn 4:42).



THE APOSTLES' FAST

This summer fast, which we now call the "Apostles' Fast," was earlier called the "Fast of Pentecost."

The Church calls us to keep this fast according to the example of the holy Apostles, who, having received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, prepared themselves to preach the Gospels to the whole world.

On the fiftieth day after His rising from the tomb, and the ninth day after His Ascension and sitting at the right hand of the Father, the Lord sent down the Holy Spirit upon all His disciples and Apostles on the day of Pentecost. This is one of the greatest feasts of the Lord. This is the completion of the new, eternal covenant with mankind. When the Holy Spirit came down upon the Apostles, the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of wisdom and revelation inscribed the new law of Zion in place of the law of Sinai. The law of Sinai gave place to the grace of the Holy Spirit, which confirmed the law [of Moses], and bestowed strength to fulfill the Law of God, which pronounces justification not for works, but by grace.

We do not fast on Pentecost [or during the after-feast, which is fast-free], because the Lord was with us during those days. He Himself said, *Can you make the children of the bridal chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them?* (Lk. 5:34).

"After the extended feast of Pentecost, the fast is particularly needed in order to cleanse our mind by ascetic labors, and to make us worthy of the gifts of the Holy Spirit," writes St. Leo the Great, "After the present feast, which the Holy Spirit has sanctified by His descent, all the people usually keep a fast beneficially established for the healing of soul and body, and therefore requiring that we spend it with the appropriate reverence. For we do not doubt that after the Apostles' hearts were filled with the Spirit of truth promised to them from on high, among the other mystical heavenly teachings given by their Teacher, they were given also the teaching on spiritual continence, so that their hearts, purified by fasting, would be made capable of receiving gifts of grace ... It would not be possible to struggle in a pampered body and fattened flesh against the persecutions and the fierce threats of the ungodly that lay ahead; for that which delights our outer man destroys our inner



Apostle Peter

man, and the more a wise soul mortifies its flesh, the purer it becomes."

"Therefore, enlightening all the sons and daughters of the Church by their example and instruction, the teachers designated a holy fast at the onset of warfare for Christ, so that as we set out to battle against spiritual deprivation, we would have temperance as our weapon, and thus mortify our sinful desires, for our unseen enemies and fleshless foes will not overcome us if we do not give ourselves over to fleshly lusts. Although the tempter constantly and invariably desires to do us harm, he remains powerless and ineffective when he does not find any side of us to attack ... This is why the steadfast and saving custom has been established, after these holy and joyful days we have celebrated in honor of the Lord, Who rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, and after we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit, of keeping a fast."

"The custom of earnestly keeping the fast is necessary also in order to preserve those gifts imparted now to the Church from God. Having been made temples of the Holy Spirit, and having drunk more than ever the Divine waters, we must not submit to any desires, or serve any vices, so that the habitation of the virtues might not be defiled by any unclean thing. With God's help and cooperation,

we can all achieve this, if only we will cleanse ourselves by fasting and almsgiving, strive to free ourselves from sinful impurity, and bring forth abundant fruits of love." Further, St. Leo, Pope of Rome writes, "In the Apostolic canons inspired by God Himself, the Church fathers have, at the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, established first and foremost that all virtuous labors begin with fasting."

"They have done this because God's commandments can be fulfilled well only when Christ's army is protected from all temptations of sin by holy abstinence. Thus, beloved, we must exercise ourselves in fasting especially at the present time, as we are commanded to do at the close of the fifty days that follow the Resurrection of Christ, up to the descent of the Holy Spirit, which we have solemnly observed."

"This fast has been given to us in order to preserve

Cont. on page 12

HIERARCHAL SCHEDULE

March 19 – April 29, 2012

March 23. New York, NY. St. Dumitru. Deanery Conferences.

March 24. Ridgewood, NY. Descent of Holy Spirit. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. **Evening:** Elmhurst, NY. St. Mary. Great Vespers.

March 25. New York, NY. St. Dumitru. Blessing of Hierarchal vestments & Gospel book. Blessing of Reader & Subdeacon. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Ordination of Deacon Gheorghe Acsente to Holy Priesthood. Banquet. Pastoral Dialogue with members of Three Hierarchs Church.

March 26. Queens, NY. Visit to site of Three Hierarchs Parish.

March 29. Toronto, ON. Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Toronto. Canadian Conference of Orthodox Bishops meeting.

April 1. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

April 8. Warren, MI. Descent of Holy Spirit. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy for Palm Sunday.

April 10-18. Montreal, QC. Visit to Parishes and Missions for Holy Week and Pascha.

April 10. Montreal, QC. Annunciation (Buna Vestire). Arrival and Pastoral Visit.

April 11. Saint-Eustache/Terrebonne, QC. St. Panteleimon Mission. Great and Holy Wednesday. **Morning:** Pastoral visit with Rev. Fr. Vasile Trif and Parishioners. Agape meal.

April 11. Montreal, QC. Annunciation (Buna Vestire). Great and Holy Wednesday. **Evening:** Bridegroom Service with Rev. Fr. Liviu Alexandrescu and faithful. Agape meal.

April 12. Montreal, QC. St. Nicholas. Great and Holy Thursday. **Morning:** Divine Liturgy with V. Rev. Fr. Prof. Cezar Vasiliu, Rev. Fr. Daniel Ungureanu and faithful. Present: Rev. Fr. Ioan Iancu. Agape meal.

April 12. Pierrefonds, QC. Protection of the Mother of God Mission. Great and Holy Thursday. **Evening:** Matins/12 Gospels with Rev. Fr. Gabriel C. Alexe and faithful. Agape meal.

April 13. Montreal, QC. Ascension of the Lord Mission. Great and Holy Friday. **Afternoon:** Vespers with V. Rev. Fr. Prof. Nicolae Stoleru and faithful. Agape meal.

April 13. Laval, QC. St. Andrew Mission. Great and Holy Friday. **Evening:** Lamentations Service with Rev. Fr. Dan Nicolau, Fr. Ioan Zinca and faithful. Agape meal.

April 14. Montreal, QC. Holy Brancoveanu Martyrs Mission. Great and Holy Saturday. Divine Liturgy with Rev. Fr. Codrut Ion and faithful. Agape meal.

April 14. Montreal, QC. Annunciation (Buna

Vestire). Great and Holy Pascha. Resurrection Service and Paschal Liturgy with Rev. Fr. Liviu Alexandrescu, Rev. Fr. Adrian Manca and faithful. Agape meal.

April 15. Montreal, QC. Holy Ascension Mission. Paschal Vespers with V. Rev. Fr. Nicolae Stoleru, Rev. Fr. Paul Catalin Stoleru and faithful. Pastoral Visit.

April 16. Anjou, QC. St. Elias Mission. Bright Monday. Divine Liturgy with Rev. Fr. Ioan Cotrigasanu, Rev. Fr. Vasile Trif and faithful. Agape meal.

April 17. Montreal, QC. Annunciation (Buna Vestire). Bright Tuesday. Divine Liturgy with Rev. Fr. Liviu Alexandrescu, Rev. Fr. Adrian Manca and faithful. Agape meal.

April 17. Montreal, QC. Annunciation (Buna Vestire). Clergy Meeting with V. Rev. Fr. Ioan Cudrutescu and local clergy. Discussions. Agape meal.

April 21-22. Toronto, ON. All Saints Serbian Cathedral. Thomas Sunday. Concelebrated Divine Liturgy with His Holiness, Patriarch Irineji of Belgrade, His Grace Bishop Georgji, His Eminence Metropolitan Soterios, His Grace Bishop Job, His Grace Bishop Theodoros.

April 28-29. Warren, OH. Holy Resurrection. Myrrhbearing Women Sunday. 95th Anniversary. **Saturday:** Great Vespers and Banquet. **Sunday:** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

May 4-5. Toledo, OH. St. George Bulgarian Cathedral. **Friday:** Vespers and Profession of Faith of Archimandrite Alexander. **Saturday:** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy and Consecration of Bishop Alexander as Ruling Hierarch of the Bulgarian Diocese of the OCA celebrated by His Beatitude Metropolitan Jonah and members of the Holy Synod of Bishops. Banquet.

May 6. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

May 7-10. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Holy Synod of Bishops Spring Meeting.

May 11-20. Regina, SK. Visit to Parishes and Missions in Western Canada.

May 12-13. Regina, SK. St. Nicholas. 110th Anniversary. **Saturday:** Great Vespers. Reception. **Sunday:** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Banquet.

May 14. Lennard, MB. St. Elias. Vespers. Shell Valley, MB. St. John. Visit.

May 15. MacNutt, SK. Holy Trinity. Visit. Canora, SK. Sts. Peter & Paul. Visit and inspection of property.

May 16-17. Regina, SK. St. George Cathedral. Preparations for consecration of the Altar.

May 18-19. Ft. Qu'Appelle, SK. Deanery Centre. **Friday:** Clergy of Western Canada Deanery meeting. Vespers. **Saturday:** Deanery Meeting. Brotherhood of Canada Meeting. Centre Administration Meeting.

May 19-20. Regina, SK. St. George Cathedral.

Cont. on page 14

A Cause ...

Cont. from page 14

erhood of Canada, had travelled from MacNutt, SK, with his wife, Adelia. Tamara Laroque and Mary Thorne with daughter, Sophia, from Winnipeg had also come to blend their beautiful voices with those of Alice Rayner, Lilly Murariu and Maria Tomici in the choir. Chris Farah had come from the state of Washington; Dianne and Riad Farah had travelled from Michigan. Many others had come from surrounding towns and villages.

So many people from so many places – for so many years! Svetlana was bewildered. Later, at the Banquet of Celebration, she heard the Lieutenant Governor recount how her own grandfather had emigrated to Regina from Romania many years before; had started a construction company that grew into one of the biggest and most successful businesses in the city. Now, along with thousands of immigrants who kept pouring in to meet the labour requirements of a strong and growing Provincial economy, here was Svetlana, with her husband Eugeniu – also in the construction industry. What could they become in this new country? What did the future hold for baby Adalina and her parents?

Svetlana had learned that early the previous morning, His Eminence, Nathaniel, had conducted a memorial service for departed family members of the congregation; and that he and Fr. Ionut had visited and blessed the grave of Nicolai Zora, one the Founders of St. Nicholas Church. Nicolai Zora and his family, having arrived from Romania in 1894, had spent their first winter in Saskatchewan living in a hole – dug by hand – in a hill on the bald prairie. The fact that they and others had survived long enough to begin building St. Nicholas Church in 1901 seemed to be a miracle to Svetlana. But they had had a vision, and it was simple:

To build and establish an inviolable structure right here on Canadian soil where they would no longer be strangers, foreigners or outsiders. Here, they would be able to pray freely and without embarrassment, in the treasured sounds and intonations of their own Romanian language and tradition – as a family of families. They would also be able to welcome newcomers into a ready-made community of love, familiarity and support.

Then Svetlana realized that she and Eugeniu, Tamara, Yuri and baby Adalina were among the thousands of “newcomers” who had come – over the past 110 years – from so far away, and had been welcomed into this wonderful “family of families”.

Christ is risen indeed! This was His love. This was the great and immediate cause for celebration!

And so they did.

Harvey Staseson

Apostles' Fast ...

Cont. from page 10

us from slackness, for it is very easy to become slack due to the long period in which we were allowed to eat various foods. If we do not cultivate the field of our flesh continually, thorns and thistles will easily grow there, and produce fruits suitable only for burning, and not for the harvest storehouse. Therefore, we are obligated now to scrupulously preserve those seeds that we received in our hearts from the Heavenly Sower, and take precautions so that the envious foe might not spoil what God has given us, and so that the thorns of vice would not grow in the paradise of virtues. We can only avoid such evil through almsgiving and fasting.”

Blessed Simeon of Thessalonika writes that the fast was established in honor of the Apostles, because we have been vouchsafed many blessings through them, and they have been shown to us as doers and teachers of fasting, obedience ... and temperance. Even the Latins witness to this, albeit against their will, honoring the Apostles by fasting in remembrance of them. But in accordance with the Apostolic canons composed by St. Clement, after the descent of the Holy Spirit, we celebrate. Then, beginning from the following week, we honor the Apostles who have instructed us to fast.

How Long is the Apostles Fast?

The duration of the Apostles fast depends upon the date of Pascha, and therefore it varies from year to year. It always begins with the end of the Triodion, or after the week of Pentecost [the Sunday of All Saints], and ends on June 28, if the feast of Saints Peter and Paul does not fall on a Wednesday or Friday. The fast can be as long as six weeks, and as short as one week and a day.

Patriarch of Antioch Theodore Balsamon (seventh century) said, “All the faithful, monastics and laypeople included, are obligated to fast seven days or more before the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, and let those who do not fast be excommunicated.”

What should we eat during the Apostles Fast?

The asceticism of the Apostles fast is less austere than the forty days fast of Great Lent. During the Apostles fast, the Church rubrics prescribe for three days of each week—Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays—abstinence from fish, wine, and oil, taking uncooked food at the ninth hour after Vespers. On the other weekday, abstinence from fish is prescribed.

Fish is allowed on Saturdays and Sundays, as well on the commemoration days of great saints, or on patronal feasts.

From the website Pravoslavie.ru (Translated by OrthoChristian.com).

CLERGY CHANGES

ORDINATIONS

ACSENTE, Gheorghe, was ordained to the Holy Diaconate on February 26, 2012, by His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel at Protection of the Mother of God Church, Falls Church VA for service to Three Hierarchs Church, Ridgewood NY.

ACSENTE, Rev. Deacon Gheorghe, was ordained to the Holy Priesthood on March 25, 2012, by His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel at St. Dumitru Church, New York NY for service to Three Hierarchs Church, Ridgewood NY.

ASSIGNMENTS / RELEASES

ACSENTE, Rev. Fr. Gheorghe, was assigned Parish Priest of Three Hierarchs Church, Ridgewood NY, effective April 8, 2012.

RADULESCU, Rev. Fr. Ioan, was released from duties as Parish Priest of Sts. Michael & Gabriel Mission, Niagara Falls ON and attached to St. John the Baptist Church, Kitchener ON, effective May 1, 2012.

AWARDS

(BERGER), Hieromonk Calinic, was elevated to the rank of Igumen by the Holy Synod of Bishops, effective May 9, 2012.

(COROI), Protosinghel Lucian, was elevated to the rank of Archimandrite by the Holy Synod of Bishops, effective May 9, 2012.

COTRIGASANU, Rev. Fr. Ioan, was elevated to the rank of Archpriest by the Holy Synod of Bishops, effective May 9, 2012.

DUMITRASCU, Hierodeacon Sebastian, was elevated to the rank of Archdeacon by Bishop Nicodim (Vulpe) of Edinet and Briceni (Moldova) on May 27, 2012, with the blessing of Archbishop Nathaniel.

ENACHE, Rev. Fr. Constantin, was elevated to the rank of Archpriest by the Holy Synod of Bishops, effective May 9, 2012.

FRUNZA, Rev. Fr. Anton, was elevated to the rank of Archpriest by the Holy Synod of Bishops, effective May 9, 2012.

MOLDOVAN, Rev. Fr. Daniel, was elevated to the rank of Archpriest by the Holy Synod of Bishops, effective May 9, 2012.

STANCIU, Archpriest Panteleimon, was awarded a Synodal Grammotă for the 50th Anniversary of Priestly Ordination by the Holy Synod of Bishops on May 9, 2012.

DEPOSED

FETEA, Archpriest Adrian, was permanently deposed from all sacred functions of the Priesthood, by the Holy Synod of Bishops, effective May 9, 2012, and his name was removed from the clergy list of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America and the Orthodox Church in America. The Holy Synod took this action with great sadness and with the assurance of its prayers.

FINANCIAL REPORT

EPISCOPATE SUPPORTERS

Joseph & Madelena Ilcus, Jupiter, FL	\$100.00
Alexa & Florica Mindea, Morton Grove, IL	\$100.00
M/M Valer Pufescu, Naples, FL	\$100.00
Attorney John & Veta Regule, The Villages, FL	\$100.00
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Paul & Silvia Costea, Dearborn Hts, MI	\$50.00
Elena Gavrilescu, Skokie, IL	\$25.00

GENERAL DONATIONS

National A.R.F.O.R.A.	\$1,200.00
(Hierarch Travel Expenses)	
National A.R.F.O.R.A.	\$1,200.00
(Vatra Housekeeping)	
Holy Trinity, Vancouver, BC	\$978.30
(Hierarch Travel Expenses)	
St Nicholas, Regina, SK	\$700.00
(Hierarch Travel Expenses)	
Holy Resurrection, Warren, OH	\$500.00
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Iustina Cantor, Commerce Twp, MI	\$10.00

EPISCOPATE ASSESSMENT

Holy Nativity, Chicago, IL	\$10,000.00
St John, Toronto, ON	\$6,900.00
St Mary, Colleyville, TX	\$5,520.00
St Nicholas, Troy, MI	\$4,100.00
St Nicholas, Montreal, QC	\$3,000.00
St Elias, Inglis, MB	\$690.00
Descent/Sts Peter & Paul, Assiniboia, SK	\$500.00
St Mary, Las Vegas, NV	\$350.00

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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(Camp Vatra Cooks)	

DEPARTMENT OF MISSIONS

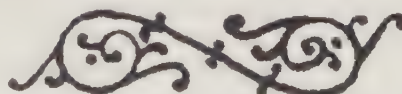
National A.R.F.O.R.A.	\$3,400.00
(St Paraschiva Project)	
St Elias, Ellwood City, PA	\$100.00

SEMINARIAN SCHOLARSHIP FUND

National A.R.F.O.R.A.	\$1,500.00
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DECEASED

SAMOILA, V. Rev. Fr. Raymond, fell asleep in the Lord on May 18, 2012 in Hartville, OH.



Archbishop Demetrios

Cont. from page 8

St. Nicholas Parish, Nicholas Koutsomitris, architect, Dn. Aristidis Garinis, Stavros Papagermanos, press officer for GOA and Archon Demetrios Panagos, photographer.

Following the presentation at the office, Steven Plate, the director of the WTC Construction and his associates led His Eminence and the other participants on a tour through the construction site. They stopped in front of the site where St. Nicholas is to be built at the corner of Liberty and Greenwich streets (the south-east corner of WTC) and viewed the vast understructures for the Vehicle Security Center now under construction, which will be situated beneath the Church. St. Nicholas will be built 25 feet above street level, atop a park directly facing the 9/11 Memorial, which will receive 250,000 passers-by every day when the transportation hubs are complete.

Following a walk around the Memorial Plaza and the footprints of the fallen towers, the group took a construction elevator first to the 37th and then to the 90th floor of the One World Trade Center Tower (previously known as Freedom Tower) which is still under construction and will reach 104 floors, making it the tallest building in the western hemisphere. From that vantage point Archbishop Demetrios and his entourage were able to view the entire area of the World Trade Center, and the extraordinary work performed there, part of which will be, by the grace of God, our St. Nicholas Church.

Steven Plate, asked Archbishop Demetrios to inscribe a thought on one of the steel columns on the 90th floor and His Eminence wrote: *"This is a miracle of human creativity, love and courage in defeating hatred and darkness, and in building love, hope and perspective of a bright future for our beautiful America, the place of God's love and blessings. Archbishop Demetrios of America – 6.6.12."*

For photos of the tour, visit: http://photos.goarch.org/main.php?g2_itemId=6241.

From the website of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (goarch.org).

Hierarchal Schedule *Cont. from page 11*

Saturday evening: Great Vespers. Banquet. **Sunday:** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Consecration of Altar Table and Blessing of Icons.

May 25-26. Clinton, MI. Ascension Monastery. **Friday:** Vespers. **Saturday:** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy celebrating Ascension Feast Day concelebrated with Bishop Visarion, Bishop Timotei, Bishop Nikodim, Bishop Matthias, Bishop Irineu. Blessing of Foundation for new chapel. Banquet.

May 27. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

Significant Details ...

Cont. from page 3

indicates a change in appearance), He allows Himself to be touched by the disciples (Lk 24:39, Mt 28:9), most especially during the examination of His wounds conducted by Thomas (Jn 20:27). He eats fish and honeycomb (Lk 24:42). A final detail with regards to Jesus' spiritualized body is the description of the clothes left in the tomb (Lk 24:12, Jn 20:6-7). One eminent German scholar, Johann Auer, has written an entire book defending the thesis that the burial wrappings of Jesus had remained stiff, in the form of His body (due to the effects of the anointing agents), such that it was clear His body had passed through them miraculously.

Secondly, from the Gospel accounts we see that the Resurrection is not only a miracle, but a miracle worked in a divine manner, as only God could have wrought: specifically, it requires *faith even with evidence*. It does not impose belief as with a great hammer. In the latter case, there would be no place for freely given love, but only for judgment. For those seeking the Truth with a burning heart, the Resurrected Jesus readily appears and is recognized.

Because the Gospel accounts record simple, honest, eye-witness testimony, they contain an abundance of detail and perspective which could not have been fabricated. Moreover, had these accounts been fabricated, it is highly unlikely that the writers would have decided to include many of the details that are present, as they would be unconvincing to people of that day and hence not helpful in their witness. From both these perspectives, we are led again to the core historicity of the events described. Through them, we see that even in the great miracle of the Resurrection, God never imposes Himself on anyone but makes an invitation to all. The Risen Jesus reveals Himself not to those who pierced Him – though there will come a time when they too will see Him (Rev 1:7) – but rather to those who have the eyes of faith and the burning desire to be with Christ. The mind may ask its questions, and it will be given its desired proof, but only the pure in heart shall see God – that is, our Risen Lord and Savior (cf. Mt 5:8).

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A NEW AMERICAN ORTHODOX PRIESTLY PARADIGM: THE MISSION PRIEST

by Fr. Aris P. Metrakos

The old paradigms had a certain albeit meager utility. They worked as long as the surrounding culture remained basically Christian. They don't work anymore. The time has come to return the priesthood to how it was first practiced — in a hostile culture, with wisdom, and a concrete and authentic encounter with Christ.

Becoming a Mission Priest begins with a change in governing values. Mission Priests don't confuse faith in the Gospel with a soft assent to its social principles or moral utility. Rather, they know the veracity of the Gospel through first-hand experience. For many, faith was strengthened when they changed careers and entered seminary. Enduring the patronizing and petty atmosphere of "theological school" clarified the eyes of their soul. Facing down and even defeating parish antagonists and persecutors revealed the strength of the Gospel and cemented their conviction once and for all.

Knowing the Gospel to be true, Mission Priests hold to the imperative that the Gospel must be preached to all people. They recognize that their time on earth is limited and regard each day as an opportunity to bring others closer to Christ. Their witness is not confrontational or manipulative, because they know that Jesus is most powerful when He is most humble — as His crucifixion attests. They humble themselves in the presence of others so that the light of Christ might fill their words.

Mission Priests are men of prayer. Their days begin and end with prayer. Their life is filled with it. One important prayer they pray is for the spiritual growth of their parishioners and the numerical growth of the Church.

Recognizing that a large part of parish administration involves the three C's — calendar, cash, and communication — they ask themselves three questions when the calendar needs an event, the budget needs to be planned, and the bulletin needs to be written:

1. Will these things help my flock know Christ better?
2. Will they add to the numbers of my flock?
3. Will they lead us into helping the least of our brethren?

They ask the same questions when planning their personal calendars.

The Mission Priest is a linguist. When it is necessary to feed his sheep in a foreign language, he does so. In some cases this means developing fluency in Greek or Serbian or Russian. That Greek or Serbian or Russian priest might even find himself studying Slobovian when immigrants from Slobovia fill his city. When the neighborhood around the parish begins to change, it might

mean learning Spanish or Cambodian.

In all instances the Mission Priest must have an absolute mastery of English. We live and work in America. There is a difference between "abyss" and "abbess." Speaking English also includes situational awareness. You don't preach with an affected JFK-esque accent in Dothan, Alabama and you don't say "y'all" in South Boston. Summer camp sermons should avoid words like "hypostasis," while the vocative case of "dude" is never used at banquets.

Mission Priests are fearful. They fear losing their communion with God by being caught up in the things of this world. They worry about losing their courage in the coercion and compromise of ecclesiastical politics.

And they are moral. Nothing damages the credibility of the message more than a messenger who is sexually perverted or chemically dependent. Morality also means telling the truth about the rules articulated in the Bible and the Canons. Jesus dined with harlots and tax collectors but he never condoned their behavior.

Finally, the Mission Priest refuses to conform to false expectations of a priestly personality type imposed by others. God has called him — not the Parish Council, not a benefactor, not his boyhood parish priest, not even the Bishop. And God made us different. Each priest has a distinct role and service in the Church. In the end, only God may judge his faithfulness.

Parish priests need to change or else go the way of the IBM Selectric. Being a Shaman, Cruise Director, CEO, Museum Curator, or Chaplain doesn't cut it anymore. We need a true paradigm shift. We need prayerful servants in whom the Good News of Jesus Christ rests deep. For Orthodoxy in America, the era of the Mission Priest has arrived.

Excerpt from the article, "Brother, Can You Spare A Paradigm?", first published June 30, 2006 on Orthodoxytoday.org.

Seeding ... *Cont. from page 7*

the Mother of God Mission, Fort Qu'Appelle) and a great number of faithful. The Hierarchal Divine Liturgy was followed by a festive banquet at the Regina Inn.

On Monday, May 21st, Archbishop Nathaniel left Regina, but not its faithful whom he serves with so much dedication. We thank you very much, Your Eminence, for being such a good shepherd who indeed "gives His life for the sheep" (John 10:11). Many Years, O Master!

Fr. Cosmin Sicoe

The Annual Almanac published by The Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America in December 2012
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prăjiturile, castronele cu ciorbă fierbinte, cafea proaspătă, sticle de apă și fructe.

Am fost cu toții mai mult decât surprinși să vedem cum în câteva minute, aproximativ 200 de oameni săraci s-au așezat liniștiți la rând, gata să primească câte ceva de mâncare și ne-am bucurat nespus de mult ca, pe lângă bucată de pâine, ciorbă caldă sau cana de cafea, să le putem oferi în dar și o vorbă bună, o încurajare sau o urare creștină potrivită sfințelor sărbători ale Paștilor ce urmau, toate însoțite de binecuvântările și rugăciunile Părintelui Lăpuște.

Grupul nostru de voluntari inimoși a fost primit de către acei oameni nevoiași cu o căldură absolut deosebită; se adunaseră în jurul nostru și nu mai conțineau să-și exprime bucuria că suntem acolo și că în aceea zi (Vinerea Mare) ne-am adus aminte de ei, bucurie care până la urmă ne-a cuprins pe toți

și ne-a dus cu mintea și sufletul la cuvintele monahului de la Rohia, Nicolae Steinhardt care frumos spunea că: **"daruind vei dobândi."**

Multe și calde mulțumiri tuturor participanților și donatorilor care au sponsorizat această activitate și tuturor le dorim pace și sănătate, cât și puterea de a face mereu bine tuturor semenilor noștri!

Cu apreciere,

Alice Vasile (inițiator, organizator și coordonator logistic)

Vineri, 6 aprilie 2012, a fost o zi plăcută și destul de răcoroasă de primăvară, zi în care ne-am întâlnit dis-de-dimineața la biserica "Sfânta Treime" din New Westminster cu un grup de oameni inimoși, pentru ca împreună să pregătim câteva pachetele cu mâncare pentru oamenii flămânzi ai străzii.

Această activitate a fost binecuvântată de către părintele nostru paroh, preotul Nicolae Lăpuște, care alături de noi, a participat la toate cele plănuite.

După ce am terminat de pregătit 400 de pachetele cu alimente, am mers să le distribuim, împreună cu



INTERVIU CU I.P.S. NATHANIEL ÎN TIMPUL VIZITEI LA COMUNITATEA ROMÂNEASCĂ DIN MONTREAL

În perioadă Sărbătorilor de Paște, comunitatea românească din Montreal a primit o importantă vizită, aceea a Înalt Prea Sfinției Sale Nathaniel, arhiepiscop al Episcopiei Române Ortodoxe din America (Vatra), ocazie rară de care am profitat pentru a-i solicita un interviu.

ZigZag Român-Canadian: *Înalt Prea Sfinția Voastră, în primul rînd Hristos a Înviat și bine ați venit la Montreal, după nu puțini ani, într-o vizită oficială. Care a fost programul acestei vizite?*

I.P.S. Nathaniel: Adevărat a Înviat și mulțumesc de urări. În ceea ce privește venirea mea la Montreal, scopul principal a fost acela de a vizita misiunile la care nu am fost niciodată, respectiv cele înființate mai recent, cum sînt de exemplu Sf. Pantelimon, la părintele Vasile Trif, sau Sf. Ilie Tesviteanu, la părintele Ioan Cotrigășanu. Nu am omis însă nici misiunile sau parohiile mai vechi, astfel că în total am participat și am oficiat, în Săptămîna Patimilor și în Săptămîna Luminată, nu mai puțin de 11 slujbe în lăcașurile de cult ortodoxe românești care aparțin de episcopia noastră.

ZZ: *A doua întrebare se leagă într-un fel tocmai de aceste biserici și misiuni ortodoxe românești apărute în ultimii ani. Dacă pînă acum 5-6 ani existau la Montreal doar 3 biserici supuse canonic episcopiei de la Vatra (Buna Vestire, Sf. Nicolae și Înălțarea Domnului), acum există 9 (6 în Montreal, 2 în Laval și 1 în St. Eustache). Cum apreciați această înmulțire extrem de rapidă, în condițiile în care sînt pline doar la sărbătorile mari (Paște, Crăciun, Sf. Maria etc)?*

N: Creșterea numărului bisericilor sau misiunilor ortodoxe românești în ultimii ani este un fapt real, iar o primă explicație ar fi sosirea în Montreal a unui număr foarte mare de români în ultima vreme, printre care s-au aflat și mulți preoți ortodocși. Pe de altă parte, dacă în țară există biserici mari sau chiar catedrale unde credincioșii dintr-un oraș sau dintr-un cartier pot veni la slujbă, și unde se află eventual și un număr mai mare de preoți, aici situația este diferită. Românii sînt împrăștiați în întregul Montreal, plus orașele limitrofe, ca să ne referim doar la această zonă a Canadei. S-a ajuns astfel la înființarea unor misiuni (biserici) în diferite cartiere ale Montrealului sau în orașele învecinate, pentru că românii au dorit să aibă o biserică ortodoxă cît mai aproape de locuință, ca să nu trebuiască să parcurgă distanțe foarte mari pentru a participa la serviciile religioase.

ZZ: *Și credeți că fragmentarea masei de enoriași este bună, este un lucru pozitiv?*

N: Cred că acest lucru este foarte practic. Dacă este bine sau nu este o altă discuție, dar consider că este foarte practic. Dacă în viitor vom avea un număr mai mare de credincioși români într-o zonă sau alta a Montrealului, sigur că biserica din acea zonă va crește și va deveni mai mare și mai puternică. Vedeți, de exemplu, atunci cînd am reprimis biserica Buna Vestire în episcopie, am încercat să aducem în sînul ei cît mai mulți credincioși români de pe întreg teritoriul Montrealului. Dar acum situația s-a schimbat, mai ales că printre imigranți au apărut și mulți preoți, iar bisericile au început să răsără ca ciupercile după ploaie. În plus, preoții români de aici sînt obligați să aibă și un alt serviciu, pentru că bisericile fiind mici nu au un venit suficient din partea lor și trebuie să lucreze peste săptămîna, doar sîmbăta și duminica putîndu-se dedica bisericii și serviciilor religioase, ceea ce este iarăși o notă specifică a bisericilor de aici față de cele din țară.

ZZ: *Un ultim dar la fel de important subiect: unirea celor două episcopii românești de pe teritoriul Americii de Nord, cea de la Vatra cu cea a Patriarhiei Române. În ultimii 3 ani au fost inițiate acțiuni în acest sens, ajungînd pînă la organizarea de congrese simultane ale celor două episcopii și la înființarea de comisii juridice și administrative care să lucreze la unificare. În ce stadiu se află acest important proiect și care ar fi orizontul de așteptare?*

N: Ideea și chiar inițiativa unificării celor două episcopii datează de vreo 20 de ani, dar este o înfăptuire ceva mai complicată. Vedeți, trebuie să avem în vedere că biserica ortodoxă este în principiu una "locală" sau "națională": adică biserica românească se află în România, cea rusă se află în Rusia, cea bulgară în Bulgaria, ș.i.a.m.d. Ei bine, în SUA și Canada, datorită imigrației masive, avem biserici (și episcopii) ortodoxe românești, rusești, bulgărești, albaneze etc. În aceste condiții, fiecare Patriarhie națională încearcă să atragă sub jurisdicția sa episcopia sau episcopiile credincioșilor de aceeași limbă, mai ales dacă numărul acestora este mare.

Dar intervine aici problema autonomiei episcopiilor ortodoxe din America de Nord, care sînt auto-cefale, adică nu depind de nici o Patriarhie. Avem aceeași credință și aceleași dogme și taine cu biserica ortodoxă din România, chiar am slujit împreună cu fostul patriarh Teoctist al României și am participat la sfințirea IPS Nicolae, iar acesta a participat la sfințirea PS Irineu, deci din punct de vedere teologic și dogmatic nu există diferențe.

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PĂRINTELE ROMAN BRAGA SĂRBĂTORIT LA ÎMPLINIREA VÂRSTEI DE 90 DE ANI

În ziua de sâmbătă, 21 aprilie, Părintele Roman Braga a fost sărbătorit la Mănăstirea Adormirea Maicii Domnului de către Înalt Prea Sfințitul Arhiepiscop Nathaniel, împreună cu un sobor de 20 de preoți și diaconi și de aproximativ 150 de credincioși. După slujba Sfintei Liturghii și predicile rostite de către Părinții George Ursache (în Română) și Paul Albert (în Engleză), a urmat o masă festivă în trapeza mănăstirii. Apoi, au urmat două momente artistice oferite de către quartetul Parohiei "Sf. Constantin și Elena" din Indianapolis, IN și de către corul "Vale-rian D. Trifa" al Catedralei Sf. Gheorghe din Southfield,

MI. Dl. Alexandru Tomescu a rostit un poem compus special pentru acest eveniment.

În semn de adâncă prețuire, Înalt Prea Sfințitul Arhiepiscop Nathaniel a rostit un cuvânt de elogiare a personalității Părintelui Roman și i-a oferit o medalie specială. În final, Părintele Roman a mulțumit tuturor și a spus cu umorul său duhovnicesc atât de caracteristic, că nu merită el, un biet călugăr atâta cinste și a solicitat celor prezenți ca în loc de cadouri să ajute maicile în proiectul de construire a noii biserici. Toți cei prezenți s-au întors la casele lor cu bucurie duhovnicească.

Participant

RUGĂCIUNE

Fă-mi Doamne sufletul un schit,
La vama dintre lumi să-l cîntorești,
Ca-n luminate dimineți cu rugă mîrit,
Să-ți preaslăvesc Puterile Cerești.

Și-n schitu-acesta, mic, stingher,
Pe prag când stau la loc de îspășire,
S-aprinzi lumini precum în Cer,
Și să-ți reverși, aleasa Ta iubire.

Mă-nchin la Tine Atotslăvit Părinte,
Cu sufletul și fruntea, plecate spre altar,
Smerit ți-ascult preasfintele cuvinte,
Ce-mi vindecă durerea și oful de hoinar.

Pe drumul lung de veacuri și decenii,
În suflete-Ai sădit eterna Ta Lumină
Și Duhul ce coboară, ca-n serile cu Denii,
Din lumea Ta cea mare, de-a pururea divină.

Și calea vieții mele, cu zilele cernite,
Îndreapt-o către Tine, arată-mi Steaua mare,
Alungă-mi pe pustiuri, mulțimea de ispite,
Ascultă-mi plecăciunea, cerând a Ta iertare.

Revolta mea, răsfîrînge-o-n umilință,
Harul Tău și mila coboară-le spre mine,
Iar pâinea plămădită în lacrimi și credință,
S-o împarți la toți, cum știi Tu bine.

Nevrednic sunt, dar dă-mi înțelepciune,
Căci viața mea, O Doamne, la Tine o închin.
Tot ce-am mai bun, îl pun în rugăciune...
Acum și pururea, și-n veci vecilor, Amin.

Alexandru Tomescu

Notă: Poezia a fost citită, cu dedicație Prea Cuviosului Părinte Arhimandrit Roman Braga, cu ocazia celebrării patriarhalei vârste de 90 de ani, onorată de prezența IPS Arhiepiscop Nathaniel și a unui sobor preoțesc, la Mănăstirea "Adormirea Maicii Domnului", Rives Junction, MI, sâmbătă 21 aprilie 2012.

Interviu cu I.P.S. Nathaniel ...

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Există însă diferențe de ordin administrativ, pentru că episcopia noastră funcționează după legile din America de Nord, nu după cele din România. Așa că dacă vorbim de unificarea episcopiei de la Detroit ("Vatra") cu cea de la Chicago (de sub jurisdicția Patriarhiei Române), aceasta trebuie să fie o unificare strict locală, pentru că viitoarea structură bisericească rămîne pe teritoriul Americii de Nord. Trebuie deci să avem deplină autonomie administrativă, incluzînd aici și alegerea episcopilor și a mitropolitului, iar Patriarhia Română ne dă doar Sf. Mir. Ei bine, aici intervin anumite probleme, pentru că funcționarea administrativă și financiară a episcopiei noastre se face după legile americane, care sînt diferite de cele românești. Și de aceea ar fi extrem de greu să dau un termen limită în care aceste probleme vor fi depășite.

A consemnat
ADRIAN ARDELEAN
www.zigzag-online.ro

Articolul preluat din ZigZag Român-Canadian, Aprilie 2012, Ediția II. Titlul original: "În exclusivitate pentru ZigZag Român-Canadian, Î.P.S. Nathaniel explică procedura de unificare a episcopilor ortodocși române din America de Nord".

VIZITA PREA SFINȚITULUI EPISCOP VICAR IRINEU ÎN PAROHIA "SF. TREIME" DIN VANCOUVER



Irineu Duvlea, Episcop vicar al Episcopiei Ortodoxe Române din America și Canada, însoțit de Prea Cucernicul Părinte Ierodiacon Sebastian Dumitrașcu împreună cu preotul paroh Nicolae Lăpuște au oficiat slujba Utreniei învierii de la miezul nopții urmată de Sfânta Liturghie. Cei aproape o mie de participanți au primit lumina învierii de la Prea Sfinția Sa și au cântat cu inimile pline de bucurie *Hristos a Înviat*. Răspunsurile la Sfânta Liturghie au fost date de către toți credincioșii care cu multă evlavie au rămas într-un număr semnificativ pentru a primi Sfânta împărtășanie. După Sfânta Liturghie a urmat agapa pascală îmbelșugată oferită tuturor celor prezenți. Prea Sfințitul Episcop Irineu a binecuvântat bucatele de carne, brânză și ouăle roșii, încondeiate frumos de către creștini.

Vecernia Luminată cu citirea Sfintei Evanghelii în mai multe limbi a fost oficiată Duminică 15 aprilie, a.c. de la ora 4:00PM de către Prea Sfințitul Episcop Irineu, P.C. Părinte Ierodiacon Sebastian Dumitrașcu și de preoții români din Vancouver: P.C. Părinte Corneliu Dragomir de la Biserica Ortodoxă Română Sfântul Nicolae, P.C. Părinte Nicu Liută de la Biserica Ortodoxă Română Sfântul Gheorghe și Preotul Paroh, Părintele Nicolae Lăpuște. Cuvântul duhovnicesc însuflețitor rostit de Prea Sfinția

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"Aceasta este ziua pe care a făcut-o Domnul, să ne bucurăm și să ne veselim într-însa"

Hristos a Înviat!

Credincioșii Parohiei Sfânta Treime au avut anul acesta un îndoit prilej de bucurie la marele praznic al Învierii Domnului nostru Iisus Hristos din 15 Apr 2012, prin arhieriasca prezență în mijlocul lor a Prea Sfințitului Părinte Episcop Irineu Duvlea. Prea Sfințitul



PUNEREA PIETREI DE TEMELIE LA BISERICA MĂNĂSTIRII ÎNĂLȚAREA DOMNULUI DIN CLINTON, MICHIGAN

Când omul sfîntește locul...



Au trecut 12 ani de când starețul Irineu Duvlea al Mănăstirii "Constantin Brâncoveanu" (frumoasa și vestita mănăstire de la poalele munților Făgăraș), la invitația Înalt Prea Sfințitului Arhiepiscop Nathaniel, a venit în America însoțit de câțiva călugări și s-a stabilit în statul Michigan, la marginea metropolei americane Detroit. A adus cu el, dincolo de credința strămoșească, harul și dragostea față de poporul său, dorința vie de a-i ține pe români aproape, uniți în marea familie a credinței ortodoxe.

Ziua de sâmbătă a însemnat o mare sarbătoare. Înalt Prea Sfințitul Arhiepiscop Nathaniel, Prea Sfințitul Episcop Matthias de Chicago (OCA), Prea Sfințitul Episcop Visarion al Tulcei, Prea Sfințitul Episcop Timotei al Spaniei și Portugaliei (Patriarhia Română), Prea Sfințitul Episcop Nicodim de Edineț și Briceni (Mitropolia Moldovei – Patriarhia Rusă) și Prea Sfințitul Episcop Vicar Irineu, împreună cu un sobor de 60 de preoți și diaconi, au săvârșit slujba Sfintei Liturghii, urmată de binecuvântarea troiței și a pietrei de temelie

de pe locul unde se va construi viitoarea biserică a Mănăstirii. Îmi port pașii oboseți pe aleile pietruite din jurul noului locaș al mănăstirii "Înălțarea Domnului"... Este ultima duminică din luna lui Mai, cea care a urmat zilei de prăznuire a hramului și sfințirii pietrei de temelie a viitoarei biserici, o zi minunată de început de vară cu soare plin ce-și trimite razele calde, ca o binecuvântare peste icoanele și florile din curtea mănăstirii, peste cele trei clopote atât de tăcute în acest moment al zilei, dar ale căror sunete îndrăgite și familiare se fac auzite la ceasurile rostuite.

Mă întâmpină la intrarea în biserică dl Valentin Șerban, administratorul domeniului mănăstiresc cu fața binevoitoare și zâmbetul nelipsit, cu aspectul îngrijit al costumului său

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ÎNTREBĂRI ȘI RĂSPUNSURI

ÎNTREBARE: *Dacă Dumnezeu este Atoțbun de ce permite suferința în lume?*

T.E.I., San Diego, CA

RĂSPUNS: Dacă am admite, prin absurd, că Dumnezeu este cauza răului și suferinței, răspunsul ar fi simplu, dar cum Dumnezeu nu este nici cauza răului și nici cauza suferințelor din lume, răspunsurile se multiplică după unghiul din care privim problema, subiectul în sine fiind unul dintre cele mai dificile de tratat din punct de vedere filosofic și teologic.

În primul rând, omul nu vrea să-și asume responsabilitatea faptelor lui și atunci e foarte ușor să-L faci pe Dumnezeu vinovat de tot ce se întâmplă rău în lume. Cel mai adâncă și veridică rezolvare a problemei o găsim în folclorul românesc: "Dumnezeu dă, dar nu-ți bagă în traistă." Dumnezeu fiind bun, nu poate logic să-ți dea ceva rău. Rațiunea este un lucru bun pe care ni l-a dat Dumnezeu, dar e cuțit cu două tăișuri. Un lucru bun poate fi folosit spre un scop rău, distructiv. Rațiunea îți poruncește să deschizi traista lui Dumnezeu ca să-ți bage în ea cele de folos vieții tale, dar tot rațiunea, atunci când e pervertită, te ispitește să o deschizi diavolului care și el nu vine cu mâna goală și mai degrabă îți zice că e mai "bun" ceva decât nimic.

Dăm un exemplu: Trebuie să repara acoperișul casei. Rațiunea curată te povățuiește să iei toate măsurile de prevedere pentru a evita un accident. Tot aceeași rațiune, dar pervertită, te îndeamnă să bei un păhăruț înainte, ca să ai "curaj" împotriva fricii de înălțime și să te simți "relaxat". Se întâmplă accidentul și cine altcineva poate fi găsit vinovat decât... Dumnezeu! De ce dacă e bun, nu l-a apărât de accident? Cum de îngăduie suferința bietului om rămas după accident paralizat? Cum de nu are milă Dumnezeu de nevasta lui, care și ea are niște oase rupte de soțul ei pe motivul că e prea "bisericoasă"? Cum de nu are milă Dumnezeu de suferința unor copii nevinovați având "fetal alcohol syndrome"?

Aha, care va să zică, Dumnezeu care e atotbun l-a făcut pe om greșit, vine cineva cu comentariul. Dumnezeu, dacă e atotbun, trebuia să facă pe om perfect, adică să nu poată face rău, ci numai bine. Aceasta este imaginea noastră robotică despre Dumnezeu, o divinitate care nu poate fi deosebită de o fabrică de mașini în care totul este fabricat după același standard.

Dar Dumnezeu e atotbun prin faptul că e Creator. Fiecare lucru creat are sigiliul dragostei, de aceea este unic. Pe tot globul pământesc nu găsim două amprente umane care să fie identice, nu găsim doi copaci care să semene identic, frunză cu frunză etc. Creația implică un act absolut personal, iar Dumnezeu este Creator pentru că este Persoană și invers. Nu poți crea ceva

fără iubire, fără "in+spirație", fără lucrarea interioară a Spiritului, oricât ar "tran+spira" materialistul să nege aceasta.

Omul este creat după chipul și asemănarea lui Dumnezeu, care este Suprema Iubire, deci după chipul și asemănarea Creatorului. Având aceste calități, ele nu rămân ceva virtual, potențial, metaphoric, ci fiind coloana vertebrală a ontologicului

Uman, ele au fost actualizate în om încă de la crearea lui prin voința lui liberă de a alege, de a fi liber, de a pregusta zborul teandric spre desăvârșire: "Fiți desăvârșiți precum Tatăl vostru desăvârșit este."

Opusul binelui nu e răul, ci nimicul. Creația divină este din nimic, iar după creație Dumnezeu a văzut că lucrurile toate care au fost create erau "bune foarte", adică prin bine, prin creație, actualizau iubirea divină, prezență ființială, realitate ontologică bazată pe "SUNT CEEA CE SUNT". Omul ca să fie persoană trebuia să fie liber și să aibă voință liberă. Omul a ales greșit aventura de a se rupe de Dumnezeu, iar ruperea mlădiței din buciulul viței, logic nu poate duce decât la neantizare, plata păcatului fiind moartea. Prin moartea Lui, Iisus a altoit moartea noastră cu Vița Potirului, cu moartea pe moarte călcând.

Deci suferința și răul nu sunt opera lui Dumnezeu, ci au ca autor pe om. Dumnezeu fiind Iubire nu anihilează persoana umană, ci o îndumnezeiește, dar aceasta acțiune de îndumnezeire cere din partea omului voință liberă de a accepta și a participa în acest dialog teandric. El nu se oferă mecanic ca un CD și iarăși nu acceptă pe om, fără libertatea lui, ca un CD.

Din acest punct de vedere apar diferitele unghiuri, de care vorbeam, cum privim problema răului și suferințelor din lume. Toate acestea le putem sumariza prin suferințele Fiului Omului care ne-a îndumnezeit prin crucea Lui.

Felul în care acceptăm, participăm și înțelegem crucea trebuie să fie sincer, pentru că nu putem înțelege aritmetic eclipsa de taină ce o aruncă asupra istoriei umane, planul soteriologic al Învierii Fiului lui Dumnezeu. Sunt atâtea rele și suferințe, catastrofe cosmice și cataclisme spirituale pe care nu le înțelegem, dar pe care, cu smerenie, le înscrinem în căile necunoscute ale lui Dumnezeu. Să zicem despre diferitele încercări prin care trece omul și numai o persoană de talia lui Iov ar putea trece peste toate încrezându-se în înțelepciunea lui Dumnezeu. O femeie înainte de a naște, suferă tot felul de dureri. Dacă nu ar ști de ce se întâmplă, ar reacționa într-un mod irațional ca atitudine în fața suferințelor, pentru că nu întotdeauna suferința este asociată cu răul sau răsplătirea păcatului și poate avea un scop pe care nu-l înțelegem. E vorba de misterul crucii care nu este limitat la Vinerea Mare, ci este temelia învierii, crearea prin Noul Adam a omului teandric superior celui paradisiatic.

Lee Strobel, care a scris multe cărți după convertirea lui la creștinism, a redactat una - "The Case for Faith" dedicată exact acestor problem, prin interviuri cu cele mai strălucite personalități din Statele Unite, specializate în cele mai diverse domenii de știință. Într-un interviu luat renumitului profesor, scriitor și filosof Peter John Kreeft găsim o ilustrație folosită de acesta despre neînțelegerea omului limitat al unui plan care îl depășește. Să zicem, zice Kreeft, că un urs a căzut într-o capcană și un vânător făcându-i-se milă de suferințele sărmanului animal își propune să-l salveze. Ca să se poată apropia de el, folosește arma ca să-l tranchilizeze. Înțelege oare ursul intenția vânătorului? Mai ales ce crede ursul când vânătorul pune pușca la ochi? Semiadormit, nu cred că ursul își va schimba părerea despre vânător văzând pe acesta, că pentru a-l elibera de suferințe și durere îi împinge laba și mai mult în capcană spre a putea să i-o elibereze.

Suferință și inocență? Înainte de a ne revolta, să ne gândim în primul rând la singurul Om cu adevărat inocent care a suferit pentru noi și a noastră mântuire. Unde este Dumnezeu când omul suferă de foame, de frig, de boală și accidente în spitale și case de bătrâni; unde este Dumnezeu când atâta lume suferă în închisori, persecuții, în războaiele cauzate de cei bogați și calamitățile naturale cauzate de om prin lăcomia lui de a distruge natură, om, ape și cer? Unde? E tocmai lângă cel ce suferă, identificându-se cu cel flămând, însetat, nedreptățit, uitat în boală, nedreptate, singurătate și nepăsarea omului. Unde este cruce în lume acolo este și Iisus răstignit. În suferința omului este suferința Lui și în această suferință este începutul mersului omului spre Om, minunea învierii Fiului Omului.

Pr. Dr. DUMITRU ICHIM

Vizita Prea ...

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Sa a sporit bucuria, pacea și armonia pascală în inimile tuturor celor prezenți.

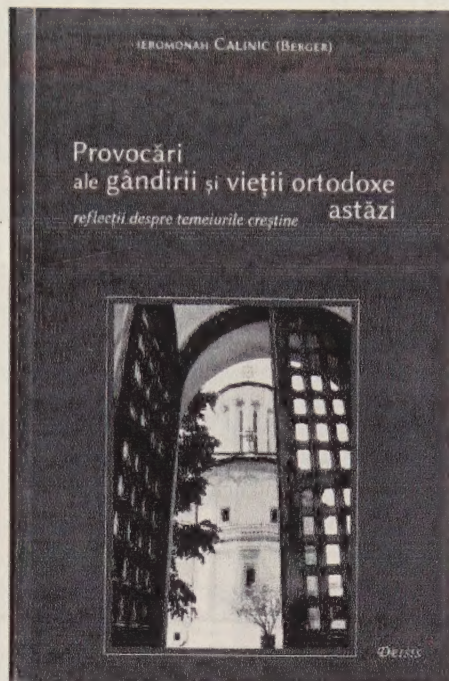
În istoria comunității românești din Vancouver, a fost pentru prima dată când un ierarh român a vizitat comunitatea la cea mai măreață sărbătoare ortodoxă, aceea a Învierii Domnului nostru Iisus Hristos. Pentru această cinste și bucurie oferită de Prea Sfințitul Irineu la aniversarea celor zece ani de arhierie în de Dumnezeu păzita noastră Episcopie, cu fiască dragoste îi aducem prinos de recunoștință, dorindu-i multă sănătate și putere în via Domnului. Întru mulți ani, Stăpâne!

Adevărat a Înviat!

Preot Nicolae Lăpuște



CARTE NOUĂ!



Provocări ale gândirii și vieții ortodoxe astăzi

Reflecții despre temeiurile creștine

Igumen CALINIC (Berger) 224 pagini. \$15.00.

O provocare ne eliberează din împrăștiere și ne concentrează energiile sufletești în vederea realizării unui țel. O provocare cere efort și dedicație, iar, atunci când este asumată, răsplata ei este țelul atins. În Ortodoxie țelul e mântuirea, unirea noastră cu Dumnezeu în Hristos. Volumul de față reunește o serie de reflecții în jurul unor chestiuni esențiale ale credinței și vieții creștine, menite să-l aducă pe cititor în arena duhovnicească, unde ne întâmpină provocările decisive a mântuirii. Întemeiate pe Scriptură, pe Tradiția patristică vie, dar și pe știința teologică actuală, aceste reflecții se constituie într-un minunat scurt manual de credință și viață ortodoxă în lumea contemporană.

Părintele Calinic Berger e paroh al Bisericii ortodoxe române "Sf. Cruce" din Hermitage, Pennsylvania. Absolvent al Universității Santa Clara (1988), al Seminarului Teologic de grad universitar Grecesc Sfânta Cruce (1994), și doctor al Universității Catolice a Americii din Washington (2003) cu o importantă teză de doctorat despre gnozeologia teologică în sinteza Părintelui Dumitru Stăniloae (versiunea românească în curs de apariție la Editura Deisis).

Cum cumpăr?

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Punerea Pietrei ...

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impecabil. Îl revăd mai târziu în sala de mese servind și vorbind cu închinătorii veniți de aproape sau de departe.

Aproape temătoare intru în noua biserică încăpătoare, arătând nouă și proaspătă în vechea clădire, cu parchet lucios și covoare înflorate precum florile din fața altarului.

Slujba ținută de un sobor de preoți, dintre care o parte sosiți din depărtări, se desfășoară ca de obicei, în mod desăvârșit. Disting deodată cu mare bucurie, figura familiară a protopopului Ioan Ciocan din orașul meu natal, preotul care a reușit să pornească construirea unei catedrale la poalele munților Făgăraș, în orașul care le poartă numele, situat nu departe de "Sâmbăta de Sus", locul de unde starețul împreună cu călugării au adus cu ei cerul, aerul, verdele munților, miresmele brazilor, culorile florilor și aburul tămâios al bisericilor din satele românești.

După predica ținută cu prestanță de către preotul călugăr Chesarie din Atlanta, episcopul Irineu a adresat cuvinte alese de mulțumire tuturor celor care i-au fost alături pentru realizarea acestui vis, visul celui plecat în lume să-l împlinească și să-l dăruiască semenilor săi.

Ziua de 26 Mai 2012 se înscrie ca o zi memorabilă în istoria mănăstirii din Clinton Township, Michigan,

zi în care sub acoperământul ei duhovnicesc, aproximativ 600 de credincioși sosiți din toate colțurile lumii au simțit aceleași trăiri spirituale.

Adieri ușoare plutesc peste căldura verii, vorbele aduc speranțe și siguranța că drumul ales, deși anevoios, străbătut nu doar cu vorbe ci și cu fapte, va fi plin de împliniri pentru familiile de români păstrători de obiceiuri și tradiții strămoșești.

Râsete de copii îmi întorc privirea și pașii mă apropie de marginea abruptă ce coboară spre lacul sclipitor. Pe o bancă de pe mal, două fete atrase de joaca rațelor sălbatice descoperă uimite limbajul lor gutural. În minte îmi revine unul din îndemnurile episcopului Irineu, pe care nu rareori l-am auzit: "Oameni buni aduceți copiii la biserică"! Este o chemare spre liniștea și pacea de care avem nevoie atât noi, cât și urmașii noștri.

Doina Popa, Dexter, Michigan

